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S E C R E T BEIRUT 000730

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POSTS FOR RSO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2018
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: BEIRUT EAC MEETING OF MAY 20, 2008

REF: A. BEIRUT 717
[1](#)B. BEIRUT 709

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU/NF) At 1645 hours on May 20, 2008, CDA convened a meeting of the Emergency Action Committee (EAC). Present were A/DCM, CON, DAO, LEGATT, MGMT, PD, Special Assistant, RAO and RSO. Embassy has met all of the initial reverse tripwires for standing down Embassy Beirut Logistical Support Mission (EBLSM)--ref B. However, sustainability of secure passage through Beirut International Airport and sustained secure access via the airport access roads are the key final factors needed to stand down the Air Bridge. We will continue to assess the security situation over the next few days to ensure that the current situation is sustainable.

[1](#)2. (SNF) Security assessments on May 19 and May 20 reveal that Beirut International Airport (BIA) appears to be operating as it was before May 7, 2008. We feel that we have met all of the reverse tripwires (Ref B). RSO and DAO have conducted security assessments and met key security contacts at Beirut International Airport.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) DAO informed EAC that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have not/not yet granted clearance for U.S. helicopters to enter Lebanon from Cyprus on Wednesday, May 21, 2008. The request for the flights was officially filed with the Ministry of Interior, which needs to first grant authorization before the LAF can issue a flight plan.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) EAC discussed the following considerations:

a. The Beirut International Airport is now open. Our GOL interlocutors are pressuring us to suspend EBLSM Operations as the original reasons for EBLSM (lack of access to BIA) has changed. However, as the situation (National Dialogue discussions) in Doha remains fluid, we cannot be confident that our access to the airport will be sustainable.

b. Embassy Beirut appreciates EUCOM's requirement to provide advanced notice before terminating the Air Bridge requirement and wishes to avoid taking down the EBLSM infrastructure while we are still in the process of determining the feasibility and sustainability of Beirut International Airport to support U.S.Embassy Beirut operations.

c. Before Embassy Beirut terminates the EBLSM, we propose that we conduct operational testing of the Beirut International Airport. We would not have to fly the EBLSM during this testing phase. Specifically, we should work to bring in military flights into Beirut International Airport as well as Embassy employees and TDYers on civilian airlines. If our RSO assesses that these operations are sustainable from a security perspective, we could then look at standing down the EBLSM. These tasks could be accomplished by early next week if all things go well here in Beirut and there is no fall out from Doha negotiations.

15. (S/NF) EAC agreed to the points listed in paragraph 4 and will begin scheduling PCS employees for return tomorrow night to enter Lebanon through Beirut International Airport. This was discussed at the 1700 local time/1200 EST SVTC with EUCOM, JCS, CENTCOM, Embassy Nicosia S/CMS. M, NEA/ELA, PM and CA/OLS and all present concurred with this plan.
SISON